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TAGS: [KNNP](#) [MNUC](#) [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [IR](#) [BX](#)
SUBJECT: BRUNEI/IRAN: UNSCR 1803 DEMARCHE, READOUT OF
FORMIN II'S TRIP TO IRAN

REF: A. STATE 21770
[1](#)B. STATE19694

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Classified By: Ambassador Emil Skodon, Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Government of Brunei (GOB) readout of Foreign Minister II Lim's trip to Tehran paints it as a non-substantive event designed primarily to satisfy the diplomatic requirement of responding to a long-standing Iranian request for a high-level visit. The majority of the abbreviated agenda was taken up by bilateral economic topics; international issues, including the dispute over Iran's nuclear program, were touched upon only briefly. Despite their hosts' pitch for GOB involvement in Iranian energy projects, no commitments were made and we expect the controversy-averse Bruneians to shy away from such investments. At the same time, the GOB is unlikely to take a strong stance on the Iranian nuclear program based on our demarche on UNSCR 1803, although it will adhere to the letter of the resolution. END SUMMARY.

FORMIN VISIT TO IRAN: LITTLE SUBSTANCE, MUCH TOURISM

[1](#)2. (C) Government of Brunei (GOB) Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade II Pehin Lim Jock Seng paid an official visit to Iran February 21-25 as part of a Gulf swing that also included Oman. In a brief conversation with Ambassador shortly after returning to Brunei, Lim explained that his visit had little significance other than meeting the demands of diplomatic protocol for GOB relations with a fellow OIC government. Commenting that "this trip was ten years in the making," Lim explained that it had been that long since Tehran first began issuing invitations to GOB officials. Lim's visit was scheduled, according to him, because the lack of a positive GOB response for so long was "becoming an embarrassment." (Comment: In 2006, at USG urging the GOB declined an Iranian invitation for the Sultan to make an official visit, and a mooted substitute visit by the Sultan's brother, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade I Prince Mohamed Bolkiah, never materialized. End Comment.)

[1](#)3. (C) At Ambassador's request, MFAT Permsec Datin Maimunah, who accompanied Lim to Tehran, provided a fuller readout of the trip during a March 13 meeting in her office. She said the Bruneian delegation met with Minister of Foreign Affairs Motaki, MFA Vice Minister for Economic Affairs Sheykh-Attar, and Minister of Commerce Mir-Kazemi; Sheykh-Attar also hosted a dinner in Lim's honor. Like Lim, Maimunah minimized the significance of the visit, explaining that only about a half day was devoted to substantive meetings and even those were

hindered by the requirement for Farsi-English translation of all conversations. The remainder of the Bruneians' time in Iran was taken up by sightseeing trips arranged by their hosts, including an excursion to Esfahan that included a visit to that city's Armenian cathedral.

BILATERAL ECONOMIC ISSUES DOMINATE AGENDA

14. (C) According to Maimunah, much of Lim's discussions with Iranian officials was taken up by an exchange of general ideas for expanding bilateral economic ties, which she described as currently "minimal" and "in their infancy." The Iranian side raised the possibility of cooperation on oil and gas projects, health care and pharmaceuticals, and tourism promotion; the GOB delegation talked about Iranian food exporters using the "Brunei Halal" certification to support their marketing efforts. The Iranians supported their pitch for Bruneian participation in oil and gas projects within Iran by arguing that other foreign investors were expanding their involvement and it was in the GOB interest to act soon before the best opportunities were snapped up by others.

15. (C) Asked about follow-up to these discussions, Maimunah replied that the MFAT had requested the GOB Ministry of Health to consider an exploratory visit to Iran to investigate, among other things, the potential for importing Iranian pharmaceuticals. Whether or not the Health Ministry followed through would depend on whether the economics made sense. Maimunah said that no specifics about oil and gas projects were discussed and she was not aware of any serious consideration being given to GOB participation in Iranian energy projects.

16. (C) Maimunah said that discussion of foreign affairs had been minimal, confined primarily to brief exchanges with

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Sheykh-Attat and Motaki about how each country saw developments in its own region. In response to Ambassador's question about Iranian views of Iraq and Afghanistan, she said that Lim's hosts did not go beyond their previous public statements on these topics. Recalling that before the trip he had urged her to stress to the Iranians the importance of complying with relevant UNSC resolutions, the Ambassador asked if there had been any discussion of Iran's nuclear program. Maimunah said the subject was touched upon only briefly, with the Iranians repeating the familiar refrain that their nuclear program was solely civilian in nature and the GOB restating its hope that the impasse would be overcome through constructive negotiations.

DEMARCHE ON UNSCR 1803; GOB SEES PRC AS HELPFUL

17. (C) At the meeting with Maimunah, Ambassador also presented reftel demarches on UNSCR 1803 and IAEA Deputy Director General Heinonen's briefing to IAEA member states, and left behind non-papers, the text of the resolution, and the P5 1 Foreign Ministers statement. In response to Maimunah's comment that the GOB still hoped for a negotiated solution to this problem, Ambassador stressed that the USG was also intent on a diplomatic solution, but that would require a united international front to impress upon Tehran the need for full cooperation to restore confidence in its intentions. In that regard, he stressed the need for full GOB adherence to the provisions of UNSCR 1803 and urged a report to the Sanctions Committee by April 30 on steps taken to implement its provisions.

18. (C) Maimunah said the GOB would study closely the resolution and the requirements it imposed upon UN member states. She told Ambassador that China was being quietly helpful to "your efforts" behind the scenes. Asked to

elaborate, she said the Chinese were telling the Iranians "help us to help you by showing some flexibility." Maimunah demurred when the Ambassador asked what led her to make that assertion, explaining that the Chinese prefer to keep a low profile on this issue and not broadcast their activity too widely.

COMMENT

19. (C) It's hardly surprising that Lim and Maimunah downplayed the significance of their discussions in Tehran when speaking to the American Ambassador. Even allowing for that, however, it does not appear that much came out of their visit. We note that Iran's official media paid hardly any attention, confining its coverage to short and nondescript press releases. The confrontation-averse GOB will probably continue to avoid any steps that could involve it in Iran's conflict with the UNSC over its nuclear program, to include both partnering with the Iranians on controversial energy projects as well as pressing them vigorously for full compliance with relevant UNSCR's. END COMMENT.
SKODON